

Haiba's Wish

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Summary: Haiba is on the run, wanting more than anything to reverse his actions. Luckily, a mad scientist presents him with an interesting deal...

***Chapter 1*: Chapter 1: On the Run**

AN: I'm posting this story a little early, since I'm now ahead on writing them. I'm sure you're all dying to see what has become of Haiba, anyway. Well, this story is focused on him. We won't see much of the other cubs. Isn't it about time he had his own story?

Haiba's Wish

Chapter One: On the Run

No one was ever going to look in the cave.

It was hidden away on the face of a cliff wall. The tiny entrance was impossible to detect amongst the pouring rain that was thrashing itself against the ground. But then who would ever want to enter the cave, anyway? It was a long and slippery climb to get there. No one would ever be interested. Any animal would just pass it by, never wondering once of who might be in there. It was the perfect hiding place.

And that was just what the cave's sole occupant wanted. To hide.

Bleak grey clouds had been hanging in the air for the past couple of weeks now, promising nothing more than the most miserable of rainfalls. Finally, they had delivered on that promise. Rain fell from the heavens, thick and fast, turning the atmosphere into one of depression.

But the animal who lived in the cave was already depressed. He didn't need heavy rain to make that happen.

The interior of the cave was completely bare, save for a few rocks and tiny stones. Nestled right away at the back, almost completely obscured by darkness, was the animal in question. A lion cub.

He was resting on his side, head flat against the ground, staring out at the pouring rain. The cub was expressionless, showing no signs of emotion. He didn't look happy, nor did he look sad. He didn't look angry, and he didn't look pleased.

In fact, he seemed quite... *empty*.

The cub had searched for hours to find this cave. He had been journeying through the jungle for hours, never stopping, and not once looking back. He couldn't look back. The thought of his past was just too much for him to bear. It wasn't until he spotted the cave that he decided he needed somewhere to hide and stay the night. There was no telling who might come after him...

Haiba shuffled around in his uncomfortable spot, his grunts of displeasure overshadowed by the sound of the pouring rain outside. He could barely see the tall green trees beyond the mass of soaking liquid. It had to be the most miserable day of the year.

That suited his mood just fine.

"Nice day," he joked drily. He knew that he had to talk to himself, otherwise he would go mad out here on his own. It wasn't like he was going to be speaking to anyone ever again. He was all alone from now on—and he always would be. For ever.

Haiba sighed, resting the back of his head on the ground as he repositioned himself. He stared up at the stony ceiling of the cave, just thinking to himself. That was what one often did when there was nothing to do but look at the ceiling. It gave you a chance to reflect on your life and where it was going. But for Haiba, it didn't seem like his life was heading in any particular direction. Right now, he was just... drifting. A lost cause with no purpose. For the past few hours, just one word—a singular thought—has been passing through his head.

Run.

And that was what he did. He ran—for such a long time, covering so many miles—until he could run no more. Then he began to walk. And then when he could do that no more, he finally decided to call it a day and looked for somewhere to rest. This cave seemed like the most suitable location. It wasn't like anyone was going to climb up the cliff and come inside to confront him. He could only think of two animals in particular who would reprimand him for his actions...

"Oh, Simba and Nala..." Haiba whispered, as more guilt was poured into his heart. "What must you think of me now?"

They hate you, he answered for himself. *You know they do. Especially Simba. He's looking for you right now, and when*

he finds you, you know what's going to happen.

Haiba closed his eyes, as tears streamed down his cheeks. He knew that Simba was hunting him down this very second, most likely hot on his trail. And when he did, then was no telling how he might decide to kill him...

You have to keep moving, he urged himself, survival instincts kicking in. *As soon as morning comes—and the rain lets up—you have to start running again. He won't find you as long as you're still moving. You're miles ahead of him already. You can make it. You can escape.*

"But where?" Haiba moaned, resting his head on his forepaws as he curled up into a sitting position. "There's nothing left for me anymore. I haven't got anywhere else to go."

Of course you have, Haiba told himself. *Your home. Your real home. The Grand Lands. You haven't forgotten all about your mother, have you?*

"No," Haiba said, sniffing as he wiped some tears from his eyes. However, it made him all the more sad to think about his dear mother. He hadn't seen her in so long. She was probably worried about him. And he promised that he would visit, too. But—like most promises—he broke it immediately. He had failed to see her for months upon months. She most likely thought he was dead.

Then go back home, Haiba thought. *No one's going to hate you over there. Your mother will be more than happy to see you. Think about it. You're the prince! The future ruler! You don't have to worry yourself about Simba or Nala anymore! Forget about them.*

"But they were my friends," Haiba responded. He wasn't particularly used to the idea of arguing with himself. But since no one else was present, what else could he do? Yell at the moon? "My best friends. I loved them." He spoke the truth. He really did love Simba and Nala. More than anything...

Tama was your friend, he told himself, causing him to flare up with sudden anger.

"No, she wasn't," Haiba snapped. "Well, she was—but not anymore. She changed. She became... something else."

And you killed her, he thought.

Haiba shut his eyes as tightly as he possibly could, wanting to block out the memory. "No," he said. "No, no, no, no, no. I don't want to think about it."

You have to, he told himself. *It won't ever leave your head. You know what you did. You slaughtered her.*

"I... I... I know," Haiba stammered. "But I... I just want to forget. What I did. It was... it was horrible."

Then why did you do it? he questioned himself.

Haiba couldn't stop himself from crying even more as memories of the previous night returned to him. Before his eyes, he could see Tama trying to kiss him. He could see her terrified eyes as he smashed her head again and again into a rock. He could see her mangled skull as she lay dead on the ground...

"You killed her," he whispered. "You killed her. Oh, my gosh—you killed her."

It had all gone so wrong. After the death of her boyfriend, Tojo, Tama's mind just hadn't been the same. She couldn't cope with the sadness at all. Tojo was the only cub who had ever loved her. Without him, she was lost. It had driven her insane. There was a massive void in her heart—and, for whatever reason, she decided that Haiba would be the one to fill it.

One night, Tama and Haiba had kissed by the side of a river. It wasn't until the following day that Tama exposed the full extent of her plan. She blackmailed him for more romantic attention, otherwise she would claim to Simba and Nala that Haiba was abusing her. It was a horrible thing to do, and it boxed Haiba in on all sides. He felt trapped.

But then Tama took it too far. She wanted to fully make Haiba into a new Tojo. She was even talking about starting a family with him, cubs and all... That was when Haiba decided that enough was enough. He tried to escape from her, but she retaliated by attacking him. In the fight that ensued, Haiba made a very conscious choice. He murdered Tama, caving her skull in until all life had been ejected from her body.

Right from the onset, he regretted the action. He knew that he shouldn't have killed her like that. He could only imagine the horror and fear the poor cub was experiencing during his grisly disposal of her...

"I'm so sorry," Haiba croaked, as more tears flowed onto the ground. "I'm so sorry, Tama..."

It's too late for that now, he told himself. *You can't go back. It's impossible to change the past.*

"I know," Haiba said, his heart almost ready to burst with sadness. "That's what makes it so hard. I feel like I don't even want to live anymore."

Without thinking, Haiba placed his claws to his throat, ready to end his own life and experience darkness for all eternity.

But he stopped at the last moment. "No," he decided. "I can't do it."

Why not? he wondered.

"I don't know," he said. "I just... I can't do it."

You're a coward, he reprimanded himself. *You know that you don't really want to die. Don't make such a stupid assumption. You're selfish. Everyone is. That's the way the world works. Deal with it.*

Haiba hung his head low, ready to cry for a few more hours...

But then a new voice sounded, reverberating through the cave.

"You seem troubled, child."

Haiba looked up—

—and the Hermit of Hekima stared back.

***Chapter 2*: Chapter 2: The Conversation**

Chapter Two: The Conversation

Haiba rubbed his bloodshot eyes, staring in disbelief at the golden eagle in front of him. "The... the Hermit of Hekima?"

Haiba hadn't seen the Hermit of Hekima in quite a long time. Not since he had placed a curse on Simba, giving him only three days to live unless he changed his ways. He did treat his friends more fairly—but that didn't last very long. Simba had changed into quite a bad cub. There was almost nothing left of the Pride Lands prince that they once knew. Whether the Hermit of Hekima knew about this, Haiba didn't know. Maybe he did. But if that were so, then why was he visiting him and not Simba? It didn't add up.

The eagle nodded, a kindly smile on his beak. "That is me, child."

"But... but you live on the other side of the jungle," Haiba said, rising to his paws. He was eager to talk to another animal. He felt like he hadn't spoken to anyone in years, even though it had only been a day. He found that talking to himself got became tedious very quickly. "Across a desert. What are you doing over here?"

"You seem to have forgotten that I possess the ability to fly," the Hermit of Hekima replied, spreading his great, enormous wings. "I do have to say that your observational skills are very poor."

"Yeah, well..." Haiba frowned. "I feel a lot worse than just poor at the moment."

"I know," the Hermit of Hekima said, much to Haiba's alarm. "Have you forgotten that I possess the gift?" He gestured to the side of his head with the tip of a wing. "I can see inside your mind. Your soul, even. I sense a great disturbance in you, Haiba."

"Well, you would, wouldn't you?" Haiba retorted. "You have no idea what I've been through."

"I wouldn't be here if I didn't know," the Hermit of Hekima told him. "I know a great disturbance when I sense one. You have committed the very worst act of all."

The way he said that chilled Haiba to the very core of his being. It was as if he was emphasising his actions, and drilling in the guilt even more. And yet oddly enough, the golden eagle seemed to be taking it rather well. He hadn't put a life-threatening curse on him as of yet. Although that could be subject to change...

"You have taken a life," the Hermit of Hekima told him, "and that is wrong. You know this, I presume?"

"Of *course* it's wrong," Haiba said, staring into the eagle's eyes. "I know it is."

"Then why do it?" demanded the hermit. "Why did you murder that cub?"

"Self-defence," Haiba blurted out, thinking of anything to defend his actions with. "She was going to kill me. I had to do what I had to do. To survive."

The golden eagle chuckled. "Like Simba? I don't see his future becoming all that cheerful. I can assure you that a happy ending won't be awaiting him for his actions."

"You... you know about Simba?" Haiba asked, surprised. "Then how come you haven't done anything about it like you did last time?"

The Hermit of Hekima shrugged. "He has made his choice," he replied simply. "There is nothing more I can do for him. But you..." He stared at Haiba, examining him closely. "You are something different, Haiba. You are aware of the wrongness of your actions. You know that you can change. But first, you have to stop lying."

"Lying?" Haiba cried, offended. "I'm not lying!"

"There we go again," said the Hermit of Hekima, throwing his wings up in the air. "More lies. You're never going to be able to change if you don't start telling the truth. You know *exactly* why you killed Tama."

"Because she would have killed me otherwise," Haiba said confidently. "Why else would I do it?"

"To escape," said the golden eagle. "You wanted a way out. Plain and simple. If you weren't so preoccupied with the thought of her blackmail, then I think that you would have let her tear you to shreds. You're not a very violent animal. It was only for your own gain that you took her life. Just to escape a future with her."

"Yeah—and now look where it's got me," Haiba said, gesturing to the emptiness of the cave. "Not very successful, was it?"

"You weren't thinking clearly, child," the Hermit of Hekima said. "Your mind was corrupted with anger and desperation. That is what caused you to destroy Tama."

Haiba just stared at the Hermit of Hekima, realising that arguing with him wasn't going to change anything. Tama was dead, and that was that. "So... you think that I can change my ways? Well, I'm not going to kill anyone else. I'm sure of that."

"You will," the golden eagle said. "Once you've taken one life, you think that you have a new skill. The ability to murder. It won't be long before you run off into the night to take another life, and another. Before long, you'll be nothing more than a mere shadow of your former self. The taste of murder is a difficult one to digest."

"Yeah," Haiba agreed, glumly thinking back to smashing Tama's face into the rock. He held up his bloody forepaws in front of his face. Tama's blood. He could still picture her skull smothered with it... "I know."

"That is why you need to change, Haiba," the Hermit of Hekima said. "You need to begin anew."

"Now, how am I supposed to do that?" Haiba asked despairingly. "I can't get it out of my head. Every time I close my eyes, I see her body. The blood... I still have it on my paws." He showed them to the Hermit of Hekima, who didn't seem too disgusted at the sight.

"There are far worse murderers out there than you, Haiba," the Hermit of Hekima told him. "Believe me, I know. Even your friend Simba. He has gone down a dark path indeed... I do not wish for you to go the same way."

"But why me?" Haiba asked. "I'm not that special."

The golden eagle laughed. "Haiba, you are among one of the most important creatures in this jungle. And... I believe you're necessary. Haven't you noticed the change in the atmosphere?"

"Change?" said Haiba, confused. "What change? What are you talking about?"

"I cannot say for sure," replied the hermit, "but there is something coming. From the darkness. The worst threat of all. And you will need to be prepared for it. Otherwise... death will consume you all. You can see its effects now." He gestured with a wing to the exterior of the cave. The rain was still coming down, thick and fast, showing no signs of stopping.

"The weather," Haiba said. "It's unusual for this season."

"Exactly," said the Hermit of Hekima. "Dark forces are at work, Haiba. And, eventually, you will have to confront them. You will never be strong enough if you don't learn to overcome this stage in your life."

"I can't ever go back, though," Haiba protested. "Simba will kill me. You said it yourself that he has no remorse!"

"I never said anything about Simba," said the Hermit of Hekima. "You do not require him to continue on with your life. Neither do you require Nala. You will have to start over somewhere else."

"Somewhere else?" Haiba said. He was reminded of his plan to leave for home in the morning. "Well... I was going to go home."

The Hermit of Hekima considered this. "It sounds suitable enough," he said. "There's a saying that the home is where your heart is. Maybe it is for the best that you go there. I presume that you haven't seen your mother in quite some time?"

Haiba shook his head, feeling very homesick. In that moment, there was nowhere else he wanted to be more than at the Grand Lands. "I haven't seen her since I left," he told him. "I miss her. A lot."

"Then do what you have to," the Hermit of Hekima said. "You have to make your own path, Haiba. It's up to you to change. You don't have to be a killer. There is still a chance. To redeem yourself."

"I just wish I could take it back," Haiba said, shaking his head in misery. "I'd give anything to make things go back to the way they once were."

"Everyone has wishes, Haiba," the Hermit of Hekima said. "Very few animals have them granted."

"I think I know that by now," Haiba replied, thinking of Simba. What he wished for more than anything was to have the

Pride Lands restored. But it didn't seem like that would be happening anytime soon. Most likely never. He was going to spend the rest of his life on this fruitless quest, and wouldn't ever stop until he had taken his last breath... It was quite bleak, to say the least.

"It's your choice, Haiba," the Hermit of Hekima said. "You can mope around for the rest of your life, feeling guilty for your actions. Or you can accept them, and try to move on."

"But how do I do that?" Haiba asked, edging closer to the golden eagle.

"You do the hardest thing," the Hermit of Hekima told him. "You forgive yourself."

And with a screech from his beak, the golden eagle spread his wings and soared off out of the cave, disappearing into the misty rain. Haiba was left sitting there, his mind reeling with bemusement at their conversation.

Move on? Haiba thought. *But that's... that's impossible. Isn't it?*

He curled up into a foetal position, finding himself staring out at the rain once more. *You'll still go home*, he assured himself. *There's nothing left for you here, Haiba. You have to move on.*

Yes... he thought, as his eyes slowly flickered shut, and he drifted off into a light slumber. *Move on...*

AN: I bet you didn't expect to see the Hermit of Hekima again, did you? Well, it seemed like the right time for him to make a return. He is quite a significant character in this story, telling Haiba to move on like that. But do you agree? Does he have the capacity to start over? Can he forgive himself? *Should* he? Oh, this is such a tough subject...

Chapter 3: Chapter 3: The Trip

AN: Time for some more Haiba! Still no Simba or Nala in sight as we continue into this rather depressing story. Still, I think it's a really interesting addition to the series. I like focusing on Haiba when he's on his own.

Haradion: Death? Returning? That's just silly...

Guest: I don't kill my characters off for the sake of it. It's all part of the story.

Chapter Three: The Trip

The next morning, Haiba awoke feeling rough, but ready to take on the world. After walking for so many hours, the sleep had refreshed him, somewhat. Made him that little bit more powerful. He certainly felt a lot better than last night—or the night before that.

And yet the memory of Tama still lingered. He was lucky not to have suffered some sort of traumatic nightmare—a trait normally belonging to Simba—while he slept. But his sleep had been dreamless, and—oddly enough—peaceful. He couldn't remember the last time he'd felt so... calm. Given the circumstances, it was very odd—but he wasn't complaining. Anything to cheer him up would be more than welcomed.

Haiba climbed to his paws, walking over to the cave entrance and checking the weather outside. The rain had finally let up; only faint puddles remained on the ground below as a reminder of the horrid night before.

"Getting better," Haiba mumbled, staring up at the sky. A few grey clouds floated lightly up above; it wasn't entirely clear whether there would be more rain on the way. "I should probably get moving."

Haiba calculated how long it would take him to get to the Grand Lands. Most likely a few hours, since it was quite far away. *And you'd better move quickly*, he told himself, *because Simba is probably on his way*.

He shuddered at the thought of Simba hunting him down. He was one of Haiba's best friends, now turned into an enemy. Simba and Nala had known Tama for longer than him, so she probably had more significance to them. They would be furious when they found Tama's body... And since Haiba had disappeared, it wouldn't take long for them to put two and two together and discover that he was the murderer. They would want to take revenge. He knew that Simba would find him, and he would rip him to shreds. That was why he couldn't ever go back. Not now.

Haiba sighed, his shoulders sagging as the hopelessness of his situation sank in. *He'll get you*, he thought. *You're not fast enough*.

But then, as he was hit by a brainstorm, he smiled. "Not unless I catch a lift."

A couple of hours later, Haiba was striding away from the jungle and into a long expanse of grassland. *Reminds me of those lions we met the other day*, he thought, smiling as he tapped a paw on the ground. They could be right underneath him. There was no telling how far that strange underground world went...

Haiba studied the miles of ground before him, knowing that it would be a long and tiring journey if he were to walk all the way to the Grand Lands. To get there, he would have to traverse the entirety of this grassy desert.

Good thing I'm not walking, Haiba thought, as he strolled across the grass.

There were a small group of giraffes assembled randomly across the land. One of them was stood at the side of a nearby stream, using its long neck to reach down and drink from the water. It was this giraffe that Haiba approached. "Hey, buddy."

The giraffe turned his head to look at Haiba. "Hello," he said. "Who are you?"

"The name's Haiba," he introduced himself, using his cheesiest grin. It usually worked on most animals. "And who are you?"

"I'm Twiga," replied the giraffe.

"Twiga." Haiba beamed at him. "Great name. Love the neck, by the way. Longest I've ever seen." He was hoping that the giraffe would appreciate the compliments. Especially considering what he wanted from him.

"Why, thank you," Twiga said, blushing at what Haiba had said. "Most of my friends do say it's very long."

"Well, I imagine they would," Haiba said. He glanced off into the distance. "You're not, uh, going in the direction of the Grand Lands, by any chance, are you?"

"I can't say I am," Twiga told him. "It's not often that any of us go there. We much prefer the climate closer to the jungle."

"Can't say I feel the same way," Haiba replied. To be honest, he was absolutely sick of the jungle. And that was before he killed Tama. Now he just wanted to get away from the place and never look back. "This may sound like a bit of a tough ask, but you wouldn't mind giving me a lift, would you?"

"To the Grand Lands?" said Twiga. "Why do you want to go there?"

"It's my home," Haiba explained. "I haven't seen my mother in a long time, and I think it'd be a nice surprise to visit her. Think you can help me out?"

"I can't argue with love," Twiga told him. "You must really care for your family."

"Yeah," Haiba said, feeling slightly saddened. "I do."

"Hop on my back, then," Twiga said.

"Really?" Haiba asked, surprised.

"Sure," said Twiga. "I know the way."

"Thanks." He clambered onto the giraffe's back, making himself comfortable. "It means a lot to me."

"No problem at all," Twiga said. "I haven't had a long walk in quite some time."

With that, the giraffe walked off into the grassland, carrying Haiba on his back. *Here I come, Mom*, he thought, glancing back nervously to make sure that no one was following him.

Luckily, there were no signs of a golden-brown cub anywhere in sight...

The following journey took hours. But for Haiba, it was quite relaxing to ride on Twiga's back and just enjoy the scenery. His worry slowly began to dissipate as he got further and further away from the jungle. It was highly unlikely that Simba was ever going to catch him now—if he was even chasing him, that is. But as the Grand Lands came into view, he soon began to calm down. The chances of him being assassinated by this point were very low indeed.

"Here we are," Twiga said, stopping at the outskirts of the kingdom. "The Grand Lands."

"Great," Haiba said, climbing down from the giraffe's back. "Thanks a lot, Twiga. You have no idea how much this means to me." He didn't particularly feel like telling him that he was a murderer on the run...

"Any time, Haiba," Twiga said. "It was very nice to meet you. You are a very pure animal—I can tell."

Haiba smiled back at him. But it was a very sad smile. "Thank you." He turned and headed for the Grand Lands, but turned back around a few moments later. "Oh, and keep growing that neck! It really is beautiful!"

Twiga blushed again. "I will!" he called, and began to walk off into the distance, beginning the long journey back home. "Goodbye!"

"Bye!" Haiba called. Then he headed straight into the kingdom. He was careful to avoid some of the pits in the ground. The old war traps clearly hadn't been cleared up... *The old place hasn't changed much*, he thought to himself.

Haiba hadn't returned to the Grand Lands since the very first time that he met Simba and Nala. His pride had been in the middle of a war with the Pride Lands. Granted, there hadn't been a battle for quite some time, but his mother still wanted revenge. Her plan was to unite the two prides, and then kill Mufasa so she could take over both kingdoms completely.

She wanted Haiba to marry Nala, and made him kidnap her. The plan quickly fell through, though, when Simba showed up at the Grand Lands. Together, they ended the war, and peace was made between the two prides.

That was when Haiba first joined Simba and Nala. He was always impressed by them. That was why he wanted to join them on their adventures together. It sounded exciting. He thought that he would have the time of his life! And for a while,

it was fun. But that didn't last very long. Slowly, the adventures began to worsen—becoming more and more dangerous—until finally he ended up murdering Tama.

Never in his life did he expect—on that day when he met Simba and Nala—that he would become a killer. He never once thought that things would end up like this. *I was right*, he thought. *My life is a mess*.

Haiba sighed, heading for his mother's den. At least she would be pleased to see him. He hadn't seen her in such a long time. It felt like years. There would be no better comfort to him than seeing her again... He sometimes forgot how much he loved her. They were very close. She was only a single parent. His father had died a long time ago: he was eaten by a hungry rhinoceros.

He spotted the small den where his mother usually resided. He couldn't help but smile. "Mom? Mom!" He was yelling her name now, hoping that she would come out of the den to see him.

"Haiba?" A lioness emerged from the den, looking around in curiosity. Haiba recognised her instantly as his mother, Amri. Her eyes lit up with delight as she spotted her son. "Haiba!"

"Mom!" Haiba sprinted towards his mother, leaping into the air and engulfing her in a tight hug. "Oh, Mom, I've missed you so much!"

"I've missed you too, Haiba," Amri told her son, staring into his eyes. "You don't look a day older since we last met."

"Neither do you," he said. "Still beautiful."

"It's been such a long time," Amri said, tears forming in her eyes. "I thought I was never going to see you again."

"Yes, well..." Haiba glanced aside. "I got sidetracked. And, uh... I've been having a lot of problems recently. I didn't know where else to go."

"Well, you can tell me all of your problems," Amri said. "I'll give you all the attention in the world."

"Good," Haiba said, nodding. "So, how's the pride?"

"Well, didn't you hear?" said Amri, looking surprised. "The pride is dead."

***Chapter 4*: Chapter 4: Why Haiba Loves Everyone**

Chapter Four: Why Haiba Loves Everyone

Haiba stared at his mother in horror. "What?" he exclaimed. "How is the pride dead?"

"They died a long time ago, Haiba," Amri told him, a sad look in her eyes. "There wasn't enough food to hunt. I mean, I know we've always had quite a low number of animals in the kingdom, but... it just became too much for us all. They starved to death."

Haiba looked down at the ground, taking in the news. His entire pride was dead? Not only had the Pride Lands been destroyed, but now his original home had been almost reduced to dust? "You mean... every single—"

"All of them," Amri interrupted, shaking her head. "I barely manage to scrape enough to survive out here. I'm all on my own. I've been dreaming of the day when you would finally come back to me, Haiba. I've missed you terribly. I thought... I thought you might have forgotten about your own mother."

"I would *never* forget about you, Mom," Haiba said. "I've thought about you every day. I just... I didn't expect that the whole pride could just die out like that. If I knew this would have happened, then I never would have left." He hugged his mother gently. "I don't like seeing you on your own, Mom. You don't deserve it."

"I've just about managed," she told her son. "Every day, I've been worrying about you. By the end, you were gone so long, I thought you may have... died."

"No. Never," Haiba said, shaking his head. "I wouldn't ever leave you. I did... I did leave my friends, though."

"Why?" Amri asked. "Did you have a falling out with them? Is that what your problem is?"

Haiba hung his head in sadness. "No. I've... I've done wrong, Mom. Made one of the biggest mistakes of my life. Well, *the* biggest, really. That's why I came here. I had to get away. I had to start over." The guilt was thrust back into his body once more, tears dripping from his eyes. "I... I couldn't help it. I had to... I had to..."

He broke down in sobs, as his mother comforted him. "Oh, Haiba," she said. "What's happened? What have you done?"

"I couldn't help it," Haiba said. "I was afraid of dying. I had to... I had to kill... I couldn't stop myself." He looked into his mother's eyes. "I killed someone, Mom. I murdered her."

Amri considered her son's words.

"Haiba... we've all killed someone," she said.

"Huh?" Haiba said, confused. "What do you mean?"

"It's a natural thing," Amri said. "You kill to survive. We hunt for food. That's how things work in a pride. We have to kill in order to eat. That's what I have to do every day. So did the pride, before they died. Sometimes... murder is the only option. It is a necessary part of life."

"No," Haiba said. "This was different. This wasn't for food. I just... killed her."

"Was she going to kill *you*?" Amri asked.

"Yes," Haiba admitted. "But—"

"Then there is no problem," she cut in. "It is kill or be killed in this world, Haiba. Surely you have heard that phrase before?"

"Yeah," Haiba said, thinking disdainfully of his former friend Simba, and how he had abused that phrase to a very high extent. He seemed to want to kill everyone and everything that got in his way. It was only a matter of time before he turned on his own friends... He feared for Nala, Zazu and Sarafina. That psychotic cub could destroy them all in an instant. "I've heard the phrase."

"Then you must follow it as a rule," Amri told him. "It's always kill or be killed. There are predators, and there are prey. You must always remain the predator, Haiba. Remember that. Otherwise you will fail in every aspect of your life."

Haiba couldn't stop shaking his head, unable to believe he was hearing this from his own mother. Was she actually

condoning his murder? No. That just wasn't right. He had killed someone, for crying out loud! He couldn't just forget about it and move on like it was nothing! It had destroyed his entire life!

"No, Mom," Haiba said. "I'm... I'm not a killer. I'm not even a *fighter*. I don't hurt animals."

"I knew that it would come to this eventually, Haiba," Amri said. "Everyone gets their first taste for murder at some point. Especially around here. I've had to kill all the time. If I didn't, then you would never have lived past being a baby."

"I'm still don't like to hurt others," Haiba said, slinking away into the corner of the den. He sat down, placing the side of his face up against the wall. "You don't understand. Ever since you dropped me on the head when I was a baby, I was given a new look on life. A different perspective. I learned to love everyone and everything. For years, I've followed that principle. It may sound crazy—it may even sound sad—but that's the way I am."

Amri watched carefully as he continued with his story. "Look," he said, "I don't just love others for the sake of it. I love it because I appreciate everything on earth. I always have. I find it beautiful. I don't hurt others because I respect every creature here. Even the 'little' creatures that you kill for food. Whatever you dropping me did, I'm glad of it. It was an accident—but a *happy* accident. It made me into a better animal. Someone who's actually *pure*. That's why I love everyone, Mom. That's why."

"Haiba..." Amri took a step towards her son, stroking him gently across the top of his head with a paw. "I have always respected you. I have always loved you. But you have to understand that this world is built on murder. I have come to terms with that ever since the pride died. Had there been more food—more wildebeest or zebra to kill—then we would have survived. Now, it's just me. Alone. For ever."

Haiba climbed to his paws. "You're not on your own," he said, as he walked out of the den. "I'm going for a walk. I'll be back later."

Haiba walked through the empty area that was once known as the Grand Lands. It wasn't much of a kingdom now that only Amri remained. The pride had deteriorated into a pathetic wasteland, filled with holes and dirt and bones. His home was gone. Just like Simba's pride, and Nala's pride. All they did was bring death and destruction. It was only a matter of time before they began to destroy themselves...

I never should have left, he thought. I left my mother her all on her own. Who knows what would have happened if I'd arrived a week—or even a day—later? I could have found her dead. Just like the rest of the pride.

Haiba stopped around the outskirts of the kingdom, observing the barren land beyond. He had never ever been further than the Grand Lands. He could walk for miles and miles, discovering new locations and meeting new faces. He could travel all around the world...

But now he had a duty. To look after his mother and make sure that she didn't come to any harm. She had lived for far too long out here on her own. Haiba thought that was a horrible life to live. Alone, with no one to help you. He was sorry that he hadn't visited sooner. Maybe he could have prevented this, somehow. Made it so that she didn't have to be alone for so long.

"I want to make things right," he said quietly to himself. "I can't go on living like this."

He hated his life right now. He really did. He didn't want to die—he was too afraid of that—but he still hated it. First he had killed Tama, and now his mother was a lonely wreck who had seen her pride die out right before her eyes. Now it was just the two of them. Two small, insignificant organisms in a big scary world. It seemed like they didn't have a chance.

And what if Simba finds you? he asked himself. He might know that you're here. He might be on his way. Claws at the ready. He'll tear your throat out. You know what he's like now. He'll want to avenge Tama's death. By any means necessary.

"We'll have to keep moving," Haiba said, sighing. Now that the Grand Lands were well and truly gone, there wasn't really all that much to offer by living in the wreckage. They would have to find a new home. One as far away from Simba and Nala as possible. *I wish I was still their friend...*

Haiba looked up at the sky. "I just wish... I just wish that I could make things right."

"You have a very interesting wish," said a voice from beside him.

AN: Dang it! A nasty cliffhanger! Who is this new face that Haiba is about to encounter? Why would he be so interested in

his wishes? Hmm... Anyway, it was nice to revisit Haiba's mother, don't you think? Shame she's all on her own. And I really liked that giraffe character, Twiga, as well. I've never had a giraffe as a character before; it was interesting to write him.

As usual, leave you reviews and return tomorrow for more. Bye!

Chapter 5: Chapter 5: The Mad Scientist

AN: It's time for two more chapters of this Haiba story. You all seem to like the idea of him having a tale of his own. I do, too. It's very fun to write.

MarkPol: I don't plan on separating any of the characters in other stories. There's only one normal story left, and the last three make up the finale. There's no more time for focus on other characters, I'm afraid.

Haradion: Me? Sarcastic? How silly...

Chapter Five: The Mad Scientist

Haiba gasped in fright upon hearing the sudden voice. He wouldn't have found it so scary if he thought that he wasn't the only animal present in the Grand Lands. Aside from his lonely mother, who on earth would want to hang around a barren wasteland like this?

"*Wah!*" Haiba stumbled backwards in surprise, tripping over a bramble sticking out of the ground. He landed on his head, looking dizzily up at the figure that had startled him. "Who... who are you?"

Through his blurry vision, Haiba could see what appeared to be a fully grown adult lion. Although he looked like no other lion he had ever seen before. He had a very dirty-looking red mane, with black scorch marks all over his golden brown fur. It looked as though he had been caught up in several explosions... Haiba had no idea what this lion had been doing. He seemed very mysterious.

"Greetings!" The lion beamed at him with wide blue eyes, extending a friendly paw for him to shake. "How do you do?"

Taken aback slightly, Haiba slowly hauled himself upwards. He half expected the lion to pounce on him and swallow him whole. But at the moment, he seemed quite friendly. "Uh... hi. I'm good, thanks. Who are you?"

"Allow me to introduce myself," the lion said, in a relatively kind-sounding voice. "My name is Wazimu Mwanasayansi. But you can just call me Wazimu. And what is your name, little boy?"

"Okay, first of all, I'm not a 'little boy'," Haiba told him, brushing some dirt and dust from his chest. "My name is Haiba. Prince of the Grand Lands."

"*Former* Prince of the Grand Lands," Wazimu corrected him. "I'm aware that this kingdom has been dead for quite some time. They all starved, I hear."

"Yeah," Haiba agreed, frowning at the thought. He didn't particularly like thinking about his old pride starving to death over and over again. It was quite an unpleasant thought. "They died. Now it's just me and my mother. On our own." The reality of the situation seemed to become more miserable with each word he spoke.

"Oh, it's a crying shame, isn't it?" moaned Wazimu, putting a paw around Haiba's shoulder and holding him close. "An entire pride—snubbed out in an instant. In fact, it makes *me* a little teary-eyed just to think about it." He sniffled a little.

"You weren't in the pride, were you?" Haiba asked. Having grown up in the pride, Haiba knew all of the lions and lionesses who lived there. He didn't recognise this Wazimu from anywhere. Unless he had arrived when Haiba left to accompany Simba and Nala on their adventures... "I don't really recognise you."

"Me? Part of this pride?" Wazimu chuckled. "I don't think so. I suppose you could call me... an outcast. An outsider. Someone who doesn't belong in the place where animals normally belong." That last part confused Haiba just a little bit. He spoke in a very odd way... He sounded almost insane.

"Well, I'm... sorry," Haiba said, not really knowing what else to say. He didn't normally have puzzling conversations with quirky lions. Well, not since that incident with the cactus and the hornbill—but that was a different story. "Why were you an outcast? You don't *look* like one. In my experience, outcasts are usually... angrier. You know—they like to take revenge and stuff like that."

But you're an outcast now, Haiba reminded himself. *From Simba's pride. Well, sort of. It's not like he officially banished you. I'm sure he'd officially kill you, though, if he had the chance.*

"Oh, vengeance, vengeance, vengeance," Wazimu said, shaking his head as he turned away from Haiba. "Where does it get you? Nowhere. That's where. What is the point in evil if it never ever succeeds? I have heard of all the great killers—

Hago, Shocker, Death—and yet they have never ever achieved anything."

That's odd, Haiba thought, slightly surprised that Wazimu possess such knowledge of his enemies. *How does he know about them?*

"So... you know quite a lot about guys like them, huh?" Haiba asked, wanting to know more about Wazimu and his experiences. "Have you ever met one of them?"

"No," said Wazimu. "I wouldn't mingle with such failures. That's all evil is, you know: failure. When has a wrong act ever done any good for somebody? There's always a consequence."

"Yeah..." Haiba bowed his head. "I know." Once again, he was reminded of murdering Tama in cold blood. Images of her terrified face flashed before his eyes. He blinked a few times, as if trying to force the memory out of his head. "It's got a *lot* of consequences."

Like having to leave your friends and hide away from them in fear, Haiba thought sadly. *I'm never going to see Simba or Nala ever again...*

"Evil can only end in tears," Wazimu said, and that couldn't be truer in Haiba's case. "You seem like a smart—and somewhat troubled—cub, Haiba. Tell me: have *you* committed any evil actions?"

"Yes," Haiba said honestly. "I suppose that's why... I'm kind of an outcast, too. I came here to get away from my past. To try and start afresh. That's what a friend told me to do. So I listened to him. Still..." He looked around the desolate area. "There's not much this place has to offer."

"I was an outcast for... a very different reason, you could say," Wazimu told him. "I used to live in the Boring Lands. Very dim place—I won't say any more—but they never liked me there."

"Well, I've never heard of the Boring Lands," Haiba said, although he imagined that the place was very dull indeed. "Why didn't they like you there?"

Wazimu sighed, as if exhaling his woe. "I was born with a brain that could not be contained," he explained. "So they tortured and teased me, and called me insane. It was bad. Very bad. Even Mom called me mad. Any child would go wild with the pain."

"Hmm... interesting," Haiba said. He'd never heard of anybody who was kicked out of their pride just for being intelligent. Usually, intelligent lions were well respected and liked in their kingdoms. In fact, the smartest ones normally ended up becoming the king or queen. It was hard to imagine an intelligent lion such as Wazimu could be exiled from his pride. "I can't say I've heard of that happening before. So you've been living around here ever since?"

"Oh, I've been here, I've been there," Wazimu said. "I've been everywhere. I am quite a frequent traveller. I've been from the farthest reaches of the jungle right out to beyond the beyond."

"Beyond the beyond?" said Haiba. "That sounds a long way away."

"It is," agreed Wazimu, nodding his head. "But it's not nearly as far as beyond the beyond the beyond the beyond the beyond. Only insane animals travel that length."

"I guess that being an outcast helped," Haiba said. "Your old pride doesn't sound like a very nice place to live."

"It doesn't matter," Wazimu said. "I discovered something far better when they kicked me out. Something brilliant."

"And what's that?" Haiba asked. He was very impressed by Wazimu. He seemed like the type of lion who was completely in control of his life. Not insane or crazy—like Simba—at all. At least he didn't go around killing other animals and taking pleasure from it... "What did you discover?"

"Crazed with rage, and defiance, I turned my cerebrum to science," Wazimu told him. "I'm sure you've heard of the wonders of the scientific side of life."

Science? Haiba said, mulling the word over in his head. He couldn't say he'd ever heard of such a concept before. *What is that supposed to mean?*

"Uh... can't say I've heard of science," Haiba said, scratching the top of his head. "What is this mystical object you speak of?"

"You know nothing of science?" Wazimu looked utterly stunned. "Science makes up the fundamentals of life itself, my boy. You'd be nowhere without the brilliance of biology, chemistry and physics."

"Sounds boring," Haiba said. "I mean, if you're an outcast, then why don't you use this 'science' thing to get yourself a massive kingdom to rule over?"

"Science isn't the same thing as magic," Wazimu told him. "Science is much more refined and easier to use. You don't get that with magic. A magical cub could train for years and years without having his or her powers fully developed."

"Yeah—I heard that," Haiba said. *Why does everyone have to keep reminding me of Tama?* He wondered. *It feels like a curse.* "So, what can you do with this science thing, huh? What powers does it give you?"

"The power of *knowledge*, Haiba!" Wazimu explained. "With science, you will know exactly how the world works. And then..." He smiled slyly. "You can abuse it."

"Abuse science?" Haiba said. "In what way?"

"Well, you can make your own concoctions," Wazimu said. "Useful concoctions—and ones that will work far better than any magical power. With my amazing chemistry skills, I could make all your wishes come true."

"Wishes..." Haiba thought for a moment. *That was what he first mentioned when he spoke to me*, he realised. *Wishes.* "Why are you so interested in wishes?"

"Oh, I can grant many wishes," Wazimu explained. "I'm no blue fairy—but I have incredible scientific intellect. Many, many animals come to me for help with their dreams. And I always succeed. You wouldn't get a success rate like that with magic, I can assure you."

"So you go around granting the wishes of animals?" Haiba said. "How?"

"Depends on what your wish is," said Wazimu, examining his claws. "I once met an antelope who wanted to jump right into the sky. I give him a little taste of my hopping potion and he leapt so high that it didn't look like he would come down. In fact, he still *hasn't* come down, but that's beside the point."

"That's... interestingly freaky," Haiba said.

"Anything is possible with the power of *science*!" Wazimu exclaimed, raising a claw in the air. "Now, I can see it in your eyes, Haiba."

"See what?" asked Haiba, confused.

"The *pain*," said Wazimu. "The horrible *pain* and *anguish* and *sadness*. You clearly must have committed a very wrong act. An act of supreme evil and hatred! Am I right, or am I wrong?"

"How did you guess?" said Haiba. "Are you psychic?"

"No, no, no," said Wazimu. "I don't believe in psychics. I just noticed that the dilation of your pupils didn't correlate with the amount of saliva on your tongue. It's the perfect way to detect sadness. And that only manages to prove my scientific genius. Now, tell me... what did you do?"

"I..." Haiba hesitated for a moment, wondering whether to tell Wazimu the truth. That he had actually killed someone. In his opinion, it was the most horrible act anyone could ever commit... Nothing was worse than taking a life. Well, other than taking *more* lives. "I killed someone."

"Of course!" Wazimu slapped himself on the forehead. "Murder! Execution! Slaughter! No wonder you appear so distressed! The fur on your left foreleg is one millimetre askew than it should be. I should have seen it before! Who were they? I'm guessing they were close to you?"

"She was my... friend," Haiba confessed, although he didn't really like to think of Tama as a friend anymore. She had changed when she blackmailed him. In a way, it was her fault that he had killed her. This never would have happened had she not trapped him with her dastardly deal.

Well, it's both of our faults, I guess, Haiba thought.

"I bet you would do anything to change things, wouldn't you?" Wazimu asked him. "Is that your greatest wish, Haiba? To change the past?"

"Yes," Haiba admitted, staring into the scientist's eyes. "I wish I could make it so I wasn't the one who killed her."

Wazimu chuckled. "I think I can help you with that," he said. "Follow me to my lab."

***Chapter 6*: Chapter 6: The Wish**

Chapter Six: The Wish

Haiba and Wazimu hiked across the outskirts of the former kingdom. It took about twenty minutes for them to reach their destination: a wide cave opening located at the bottom of a tall cliff. A few large rocks and boulders were scattered around the entrance, although Haiba had no idea what purpose they served. Whatever this scientist was doing, it was very odd... He was beginning to doubt his sanity, after all.

"Here it is!" Wazimu announced, raising both forepaws to show the majesty of his home. "My lab!"

"Your lab?" Haiba said, confused by the term. "I don't know what that means. Is it some sort of fancy, scientific word for home?"

"It's short for 'laboratory'. This is where I do all my experiments," Wazimu explained. "As you can see, some of them can be quite explosive." He gestured to the black scorch marks all over his fur. "But I don't have time to wash the marks away. There are much more important scientific things to be done!"

"This is insane," Haiba said, staring in shock at the scientist. "If you're doing all these experiments—or whatever you call them—then shouldn't you be doing them out in the open? You know—where it's *safe*? One of these days, you're going to blow yourself up."

"I cannot have anyone finding out about my secrets," Wazimu explained. "They would throw me out of the place where animals are thrown out to! Plus, there's no telling what would happen if my concoctions and chemicals got into the wrong paws... It would be a disaster. The entire world would be at risk!"

"Well, let's see inside, then," Haiba said, walking into the cave. "I want to find out what's so important about this whole 'science' thing."

The interior of the cave was adorned with several rocky shelves; several coconut halves were placed on top of them. Each coconut half was filled with a different coloured liquid. Haiba could see reds and blues and greens and purples and pinks. Colours everywhere!

"Whoa," Haiba said, not expecting to be so dazzled. It was overwhelming. "This is... this is colourful."

"They are my chemicals," Wazimu explained. "I extracted them from some odd-looking plants in the jungle. They possess many interesting properties. I once came across a flower that had a liquid that would make the animal who drank it fall madly in love with the next animal they saw."

"Yeah," Haiba agreed. He was instantly reminded of one of their old adventures, back when the Pride Lands still existed. Shocker had used the very same plant in one of his revenge schemes. The evil villain originally thought that it would act as a poison, and released it into the waterhole. However, everything—as usual—went horribly wrong, and everyone started to fall in love with Nala instead. Luckily, Simba managed to use another liquid from the plant in order to cure everyone, and they were all returned to normal. It was one of their funnier adventures together. "I think I may have heard of that one."

"Many of these chemicals have different properties," Wazimu explained, "but it's even more interesting when you mix them together. That's what science is all about: experimenting. Finding out more and more about the world. I have to be one of the smartest animals on earth with my superior intellect."

"So, what happens when you mix them together?" Haiba asked, curious.

"A variety of things," Wazimu said. "You could mix the green chemical and the blue chemical together to make the cure for the common cold."

"I hate colds," Haiba said. "All that coughing and sneezing—it really sucks."

"Well, mixing those two chemicals together would cure you if you were suffering from it," Wazimu told him. "And if you mixed the red chemical and the orange chemical together, then you could make someone explode just by throwing it all over them. It would create quite a bloody mess, though. You'd need the maroon chemical to dissolve the blood."

"So you use all these chemicals," Haiba said, looking around the amazing lab, "in order to grant animals' wishes?"

"Of course," Wazimu said. "But... I keep all the best chemicals for myself."

"The *best* chemicals?" Haiba exclaimed. "What do they do?"

"Unimaginable things," Wazimu said. "They are chemicals that could make you the most powerful animal on earth. No magical lion would ever be able to stop you if you had them!"

"Then why don't you use them?" Haiba asked.

"You know my policy on evil deeds," Wazimu said. "Mad science is so much more profitable than being a psychopath. As I said before, I keep all the best chemicals for myself—unless there's a very *special* case."

"Special case?" said Haiba. "What do you consider a 'special case'?"

"Those who are in extreme need of my help," Wazimu said. "The cases of utter horror, and sadness, and pain. Someone who has no other option. Someone like..." He pointed a claw at Haiba. "*You*."

"Me?" Haiba said, placing both forepaws against his chest. "How am I a special case? I'm not an emotional wreck."

"Oh, but you *are*," Wazimu said. "You are a distressed cub, Haiba. And I can fix you. I cannot take you *personally* back in time—but I can alter the past."

"Alter the past..." Haiba said it to himself, pleased at the thought. "So... you could make it so that someone else murdered Tama instead?"

Wazimu thought for a moment. "Yes," he said. "I can change the past so that one of your other friends murdered Tama instead of you. I'm assuming they were close to the area when the murder occurred?"

"Yes," Haiba said. "Less than a mile away, for sure."

"Excellent!" exclaimed Wazimu, clapping his forepaws together. "If they were in the nearby vicinity, then all I need to do is swap you with someone else. It'll be perfect! Now, let's see..."

The scientist headed over to a large rock at the back of the cave. He slowly pushed it out of the way, revealing several coconut halves hidden away in a secret hole. "Here is my secret store," he announced. "One taste from my mixture and you will never have murdered anyone!"

"Great," Haiba said, forgetting that he was being quite selfish. It wasn't particularly fair that he was making one of his friends murder Tama instead. But by this point, he didn't care. The grief was too much for him to bear. Besides, he knew someone else who deserved to carry the guilt more. *I hope it's Simba...*

He watched as Wazimu mixed a purple liquid with a blue liquid, pouring them into an empty coconut half. The concoction fizzled and emitted smoke, indicating that a reaction was taking place.

The scientist chuckled, holding up the coconut half containing the newly formed chemical. "And here it is! A time-altering potion! Swallow this and your entire past will change, Haiba! You will no longer have murdered your friend—and someone else will take your place!"

He handed the coconut half over to Haiba, who held it up in front of his face. "Drink it all," Wazimu advised, "otherwise there's no telling what side effects there may be."

"Okay," Haiba said, staring at the chemical. The ugly-looking mixture of purple and blue was still bubbling and churning in the coconut half. "Well..." He took a deep breath. "Here goes nothing."

And Haiba swallowed the chemical in one gulp.

Suddenly, the world around Haiba began to revolve. He screamed as he felt his entire past changing all around him. He fell onto his back—dizzied beyond belief—as everything spun faster and faster around him. When he thought that he could take no more of the sensation, everything suddenly stopped.

And Haiba disappeared from the lab.

"Oh... ow..." Haiba was shuffling uncomfortably, feeling quite nauseous as he awoke. "What the heck happened?"

He stared through blurry eyes up at the blue sky above him. He slowly began to recall the events that had happened prior to him falling unconscious. There were the Grand Lands, then his mother, then that scientist...

The chemical, Haiba thought, quickly sitting up. *Has the past changed?* He looked around, hoping to find the familiar scenery of the jungle surrounding him.

But it wasn't.

Instead, Haiba had woken up on the outskirts of the Grand Lands. His location hadn't changed at all.

"What?" He slowly climbed to his paws, bemused. "But I should be... I should be back with Simba and Nala. In the jungle."

Haiba stumbled in the direction of his mother's den, wanting to know what was going on. If the past had changed, then why wasn't he back in the jungle? *This isn't right*, he thought worriedly. *This isn't right at all*.

He finally reached his mother's den, poking his head inside. "Mom? Mom? Mom, are you there?"

"You..." a voice rasped right from the back of the den.

Haiba narrowed his eyes. "Mom? Is that you?"

"Get out," his mother snapped, as she emerged from the den. Her eyes were red from crying so much. "Get out of my kingdom!"

"Mom, what are you talking about?" Haiba exclaimed. "I'm your son!"

"You monster," Amri snarled, advancing towards him. "You killed him! You monster, you *killed my son!*"

Haiba could only gasp as his own mother pounced at him, claws outstretched and ready for the kill...

AN: Hmm... It's interesting that we have a villain who isn't actually... evil. He was pretty helpful to Haiba, wasn't he? There was also an obscure Disney reference in some of his dialogue. I'll be very impressed if you can find it. But now the chemical has gone horribly wrong. What's happened? Can Haiba escape the deadly claws of his mother? Find out tomorrow.

Chapter 7: Chapter 7: The Mistake

AN: Well, we come to the end of this story featuring Haiba. Last time we saw him, he was under threat from his own mother. Just what has happened? Let's find out.

the-mysterious-other: Yes, his name is clever. It's just "mad scientist" in Swahili. I find that amusing.

LionKingFactsGuy2: So many guesses, and not one of them right. I've actually only seen one of those movies you've mentioned. No, the reference was that I used some song lyrics from an obscure 2004 Disney animated film called *Teacher's Pet* in Wazimu's dialogue. "I was born with a brain that could not be contained..." Looks like I finally stumped you all on your Disney knowledge.

Chapter Seven: The Mistake

Haiba leapt out of the way of his mother, thumping against the side of the den wall as her claws dug into the earth. *If that had been me, then my head would have been squashed!* he thought worriedly.

Growling with the volume of about ten tough lions, his mother's eyes locked onto him, seething with rage. "Murderer," she snarled, and leapt at him again. *"You will pay for your crimes!"*

Haiba dodged out of the way again, but he wasn't fast enough. Amri's claws sliced through the side of his body, creating a nasty cut. He plunged to the ground like a stone, grunting from the stinging pain. "Mom, what the heck is wrong with you? *I am* your son!"

Amri broke down in tears upon hearing this. "You psycho," she sobbed. "Not only do you kill my son, but you mess with my head as well. You're a monster! *I want you to die!*"

"All right, so if I'm a murderer, then who did I kill?" Haiba demanded. "Who is your son? 'Cause, last time I checked, *I'm* your son. Haiba."

"You killed my son!" she moaned, falling to the ground in woe. "You killed my... my little Simba."

At that moment, time seemed to stop for Haiba. He could only stare, thunderstruck, at his mother. Or, to be more exact, his *former* mother.

"Wh-what did you say?" he stammered.

"You heard me!" Amri snapped. "You're the cause of all this! You deserve to rot in hell!"

Haiba couldn't help but feel saddened at hearing those insulting words from his mother. It broke his heart to know that she hated him. And the fact that he had murdered Tama just made him feel even worse.

But in this time, *had* he killed Tama?

Something must have gone wrong with that chemical, he realised. *This is all wrong. How could I kill Simba? He's not even her son! Something's not right here...*

"I don't believe it," Amri said, shaking her head in disbelief. "First you take my son—and then you try to break my mind. You make me sick."

"How is Simba your son?" Haiba questioned. "You don't have a son called Simba. He doesn't exist."

"Don't you *dare* say that!" Haiba backed away as his mother prodded a sharp claw in his direction. "I loved my son more than anything else in the world! Even when the pride died out, I knew I had to look after him. We were always so close. And he would never run away to be with anyone else."

Haiba felt a pang of guilt, remembering that the pride had died after he left to go with Simba and Nala. His mother had been on her own for quite a long time until he came back. He almost felt sorry for this version of his mother...

"Then, one day, *you* came alone," she said, "and you took his life. I've been a broken lioness ever since."

"Mom—" Haiba began, but she interrupted him.

"Now I'm alone," she said, "with only my hatred for you."

"Mom," Haiba said softly, moving towards her. *"I'm your son. Deep down, you know that."* He placed a paw gently on her shoulder.

"Don't touch me!" She pulled away from him, baring her teeth. "I'm going to tear you to shreds." She cornered him against the back of the den, growling with fury.

"No... Mom, no... Please..." Haiba pleaded, backed up against the wall as far as he could. His mother advanced on him slowly. Before he could do anything, she placed her claws up against his throat. He gagged. "No... I'm your son..."

"Revenge is sweet," Amri chuckled, as she prepared to slit Haiba's throat. "This is for you, Simba."

Just as she was about to make the killing blow, Haiba kicked her in the stomach. She stumbled back, winded by the impact.

"Sorry," Haiba apologised, before sprinting out of the den.

Amri let out an angry yell. *"Get back here, you monster!"* And she chased after him, her paws pounding the ground with fearsome speed. It was quite clear to Haiba that she wasn't going to rest until her son's killer was dead.

So Haiba ran as fast as he could. He knew exactly where he needed to go. *Wazimu's lab*, he thought. *I have to get him to reverse the effects of that chemical—before it's too late.* He dreaded to think that he could potentially die by the claws of his own mother...

Haiba raced through the outskirts, looking frantically for the secret cave where Wazimu resided. He glanced over his shoulder, to see that his mother was hot on his tail. She was so close to catching him.

He jumped over a large boulder, just as his mother leapt into the air to finally strike him down. However, her back legs caught on the boulder, and she tumbled across the ground, landing in a broken heap.

Haiba breathed a sigh of relief as he continued on his way, thankful that he had finally evaded her. *I find myself hating Simba more and more*, he thought. *He seems to cause nothing but trouble.*

Haiba's chest was ready to burst from all the running, but he ignored its calls for him to rest. All he cared about was finding Wazimu and having the effects of the chemicals reversed. He didn't want to live in a world where his own mother despised him and wanted him dead. He would have much preferred to have his friends hate him rather than his family.

Finally, Haiba reached the entrance to the cave. "Wazimu!" he called, looking around nervously to check if his mother had recovered from the fall yet. "Wazimu!"

Boom!

Haiba was catapulted onto his back as a sudden explosion rocked the interior of the cave, sending dust and debris flying everywhere. *"What the—?"*

From the massive cloud of yellow smoke—which had now obscured the entire cave entrance—Wazimu emerged, coughing and spluttering. He was waving a paw in the air, trying to clear the mist. "Well... that could have gone better than I hoped."

"What the heck are you doing?" Haiba asked, clambering to his paws as he stared with wide eyes at the scientist.

"That's the last time I try to mix the purple chemical and the yellow chemical together," he said. He turned to Haiba. "Anyway, what do you want? You're not supposed to be here. I thought I changed your past!"

"You *did*," Haiba said, "but it's all gone wrong. Now my own mother thinks I killed her son!"

"Oh, dear," Wazimu said, frowning. "Well, that wasn't supposed to happen. Maybe I should have used two more centimetres of the blue liquid. Come into the lab and I'll sort everything out."

"No," Haiba said. "I've had enough of trying to change things! I take back my wish! I want everything to stay the same! It's only going to cause more problems for me later on down the line."

"But you've murdered someone," Wazimu said. "How on earth will you be able to live knowing that?"

Haiba sighed. "One day at a time," he said. "Because... I think I've realised something."

It was then that Haiba slowly began to come to terms with the way his life was going. Nothing was ever going to help him

get over the guilt that he felt for murdering Tama in such a grisly way. Not magic, or science; nothing.

"I don't need this," Haiba said. "Any of it. I have to... I have to deal with it on my own. In the right way. Using science—or even magic—is cheating. It just makes things worse. I've decided that... I don't want to forget. I've always been told to learn from my mistakes. And that's what I'm gonna do. I'm going to try and get on with my life. In a way... I think that's what Tama would like me to do."

Wazimu put a paw to his chin, considering this. "Very well," he finally said. "I suppose in an emotional sense, what you say is correct. The sound clarity of your voice tells me that you can carry on with your life. I warn you, though: it will be a tough task."

"I know," Haiba said, saddened. "But I have to try. I'd be making my life worse by making it better, if you get what I mean. Some say that bad animals only get darkness when they die. I don't want that. I'm going to try to set things right."

"Murderer!"

Haiba gasped as his mother skidded to a halt, standing a few feet away from him. She looked angrier than ever. "All you do is escape me every time," she said, taking a sinister step towards him with each word she spoke. "Well, your luck has finally run out."

"Quick!" Haiba turned to Wazimu. "Give me something that'll return things to normal!"

"Uh... Into the lab!" Wazimu said, rushing through the smoke into the cave. He groped for the boulder, behind which his secret chemicals were stored. Haiba could hear the roar of his mother from behind as the scientist quickly mixed up another potion.

"This should do the trick," he said, handing another coconut halve to him.

Haiba quickly gulped down the liquid, wincing at the acidic taste on his tongue.

Soon enough, his whole world began to spin once more. He felt himself spiralling away. Down, down, down, into nothingness...

And he felt his whole world being sucked right out from underneath him.

"Hey... Hey! Are you all right?"

Haiba's eyes flickered open, to find Wazimu staring down on him. "Whoa... did it work?"

Wazimu nodded, pulling Haiba to his paws. "I believe so," he said. "Your mother vanished from the area. I imagine she must have returned to her normal state. You are her son once more."

Haiba smiled. "That's a relief," he said. "I don't know what I would have done if she finally got her paws on me."

"Everything is back to normal now," Wazimu said. "Although, I'm afraid, your past will remain the same. You have still committed murder."

"You heard what I said," Haiba told him. "In that alternate past. I'm going to try and learn from it. Make myself a better animal."

"And where will you go?" Wazimu asked.

"Back to the jungle," Haiba replied. "I won't tell them about what I did—but I will try to do good from now on."

"I would hope so." Wazimu shook his paw. "You're a good cub, Haiba. Pleasure to make your acquaintance."

"Nah. We're more than that," Haiba said, and then hugged him. "We're friends."

The mad scientist chuckled, hugging him back. "Very well. Friends."

Haiba released him from the hug. "Hmm... I'm just worried about my mother, though. I don't like her being on her own."

"I wouldn't worry about that," Wazimu said. "Maybe I should pay her a visit. I think I could take care of her while you're away."

"Really?" Haiba asked.

"Of course," Wazimu said. "It's only right. Who knows what would happen to her otherwise?"

Haiba chuckled, and then walked away. But he stopped, looking over his shoulder at Wazimu.

"Thank you," he said. "For everything."

The scientist smiled widely.

And for the first time in his life, he had found himself a friend.

"I'm gonna miss you, Mom," Haiba said, hugging his mother as they stood outside the den.

"I'll miss you, too," Amri said, hugging her son back. She was back to normal once more. It was like she had never even tried to kill her own son... "But try to visit more often, Haiba. I don't like being here out on my own."

"I'll be back soon, okay?" Haiba told her. "You're gonna be seeing me a lot more often. And don't worry about being on your own. I've got someone coming who wants to meet you."

"Meet me?" Amri said, confused.

Haiba just smiled. "Oh, I think you'll like him a lot. He's very intelligent."

Amri smirked. "Your father was a very intelligent lion," she told him. "He had a big brain, that's for sure."

"You're gonna love this guy, Mom," Haiba assured her. "Just *love* him..."

"You know what?" Haiba said to Twiga, as he rode on his back through the beauty of the grasslands. He was on the long journey back to the jungle. "I think I'm on to something here."

"On to what?" Twiga asked, looking down at Haiba.

"Something better," Haiba said, smiling. "I feel... stronger. I think I'm going to try and live a good life from now on."

The giraffe chuckled. "I suppose that visit home must have helped you," he said. "You seem even happier than before."

"Well... I learned something back home," Haiba confessed. "I know to learn from my mistakes now. That's the key to living a better life. You have to accept your wrongdoings and move on."

"Wow," Twiga said, looking impressed. "You must have learned a lot back at those Grand Lands."

Haiba grinned happily.

"Let me tell you a story about someone called Wazimu Mwanasayansi..."

The End

AN: I think that's one of the best stories I've ever written. No joke. I really enjoyed writing this. It was emotional, and—oddly enough—quite heartwarming in the end. I didn't really want this one to end in tears, and I didn't want it to be too big or action-packed. I wanted it to go out on a high note. I absolutely loved the Haiba focus of it. It also means that he's made more appearances than Simba and Nala in Series Five. There's a fun fact for you all.

Anyway, there's only four stories left now. The next one is going to be pretty fun. A kind of Series Three/Four-style story. I think you'll enjoy it.

NEXT TIME: The cubs return to Camp Kazi. But it's quite different from last time...